

"If you don't climb a high mountain, you won't see the valley."
---Chinese proverb

The Journey of 1000 Steps

There is much more to being a Dragon than just turning into a big lizard and breathing fire. And many of Jake's Dragon Powers are multi-faceted skills which cannot be completely mastered in one sitting. (Sure, you may be able to belch up some flames, but can you focus them into a tight stream, or a large ball? Do you have enough control to lightly toast a marshmallow? Or send up a flare that is all light and no heat? Or vice versa? I didn't think so.)

For his 13th birthday, Grandfather presents Jake with an ancient scroll which diagrams the "Journey of 1000 Steps" - the ancient training regimen of Dragon-kind. The scroll contains a magical tapestry which depicts a calligraphy dragon with a long winding tail. Each of the multi-colored scales along its spine represents another step and when Jake chooses one of them, a magical scroll fairy (calligra-fairy?) pops out of it and assigns him a new task.

The steps do not have to be taken in any particular order, but they grow more difficult as they go along, so it's best not to start with number 1000. [\[1\]](#)



Most of the tasks give Jake a chance to exercise one of his Dragon Powers:

Dragon Powers

Transformation / Shapeshifting:

Dragons are shapeshifters and can (with practice) assume the form of the 12 creatures of the Chinese Zodiac:

The Rat, the Ox, the Tiger, the Hare, the Dragon, the Snake, the Horse, the Sheep, the Monkey, the Rooster, the Dog and the Pig.

(NOTE: Dragon-form is the most difficult to master.)

Dragon Form Abilities - There are certain natural abilities which go along with each of the dragon's shapes. (e.g. Rats can fit into very small spaces.) The "Dragon" form in particular has a number of unique powers.

Dragon Breath

Dragons are most famous for breathing fire, but they can also exhale a number of other elemental effects, such as: frost, steam, fog, electricity, sonic blasts, ultraviolet light, etc.

Fire breath is one of the hardest to control, so at Jake's young age he may only be able to muster smoke rings and a few sparks.

Dragons may be able to use their breath weapons while NOT in their dragon form. (Because nothing's funnier than a fire-breathing rabbit.)

Flight

Dragons can fly, of course - they have wings - but this takes practice. Jake's wings are small and weak at first, so even when he learns to take dragon form, it will be some time before he can fly more than a few feet at a time.

Dragon Skin

Dragons have tough scaly skin, which also happens to be fire-retardant and resistant to magic, which means that a full-grown dragon in dragon-form is very difficult to harm. But not impossible. So be careful, Jake.

Talons and Tail

Needless to say, dragons have a few more physical weapons at their disposal than, say, a sheep.

Eyes on the Magical World

Eventually, Jake will learn to recognize the magic in the world around him. Primarily, this lets him see the difference between an ordinary short person and an elf. But it can also let him penetrate certain magical disguises, and sense magical energies in the air around him. This skill requires concentration and a lot of practice.

For certain magical creatures, this skill is an innate ability. His friend Brook, for example, can tell Jake is a dragon just by looking at him.

NOTE: The very young and the insane are known to be able to see magical beings as well. [q.v. Brittany]

The Language of Birds

According to legend, a person who tastes the blood of a dragon will understand the language of birds. This may mean that understanding birds is an innate ability of dragons. (Or it may be something that only happens when he tastes his own blood^[2].)

The commonest birds in New York are PIGEONS - a notoriously stupid breed of bird - and once they figure out Jake can hear them, they will follow him around and pester him for favors all the time.

Sense of Smell

Dragons may have a keen sense of smell. Like a dog. Perhaps they can only detect unusual scents, though, like genie smoke and unicorns.

Although this is a natural ability of Jake's, it still requires study and experience to use. (i.e. Even if he can detect it, he wouldn't necessarily know the difference between the scent of jasmine and the smell of a unicorn.)

Controlling the Weather

Adult dragons are able to summon windstorms, rain and sleet, lightning, fog, etc. G'father will teach Jake to do a little of this, but it requires a lot of concentration and willpower because this is really an ability that comes with age more than anything else. (Like learning how to slam dunk: You may have MJ's moves, but it don't matter if you're still only 4 feet tall.)

Charm Casting / Wizardry

While spell casting is primarily a human preoccupation^[3], most magical beings have a natural inclination for it and have been known to teach themselves a few tricks. Dragons being the most magical creatures of all, Jake will find that he has a real knack for the arcane arts, but it still has to be learned through study and research, and involves an awful lot of memorization.

Chi Powers / Zen Mastery

Jake will also learn to tap into his *chi* to produce a number of "supernatural" effects. To put it in simplest terms, the *Chi* is a person's inner energies (mental, physical and sometimes spiritual) which can be harnessed to create extraordinary phenomena. (It's a lot like using the Force, Luke.) As a Dragon, Jake will find that he is genetically predisposed to this sort of thing, and will be able to manifest his *chi* in ways that would seem superhuman by most standards.

Chi Powers rely mostly on body awareness and a focussing of mental and physical energies. Their exercise requires a lot of willpower and concentration (as opposed to "Wizardry" which relies more on ingredients [q.v.]

Typical examples of *chi* powers:

Iron Fist or Quivering Palm

There are several different versions of this ability in the various martial arts, but they all involve mustering one's energies and focussing them into one hand in order to deliver a single punch of astonishing wallop (or possibly using those energies to inject one's opponent with some sort of time-delayed devastation).

Vulcan Nerve Pinch

Spock's Vulcan nerve pinch (though fictional) is actually a perfect example of the type of thing one can do with this ability. (Jet Li also does a lot of this in the movie *Kiss of the Dragon*.) Based loosely on the art of acupuncture, it

allows the practitioner to induce a number of surprising effects simply by accessing pressure points (*chi* spots) on the subject's body.

Levitation

There are numerous documented accounts Zen specialists entering a deep state of meditation which allowed them to levitate. (Some as high as 16 feet in the air.)

Medicinal properties

Every Alchemist knows that dragons have numerous magical properties which can be harvested for use in complicated charms or taken directly for their various medicinal properties.

Mostly this fact doesn't do Jake much good except to attract shady characters who would like to vivisect him and sell him off for parts. However, there may be situations where Jake discovers that he can use his own medicinal properties to his advantage. For example:

- Tasting a dragon's blood is known to convey the power to understand the language of birds. If Jake skinned his elbow in a fight, could he lick the blood off in order to ask a bird which way his attackers went? Could he use it to temporarily give this ability to one of his friends?
- According to legend, if you plant a dragon's teeth in the ground, mystic warriors will instantly spring up from the furrows, ready for combat. Does this create a problem for the tooth fairy? Is this something Jake could use to gain a tactical advantage?

Here are just a few of the known dragon properties, but suffice it to say that if an evil alchemist got hold of him, no part of Jake would go to waste:

Dragon skin is known to be flame-retardant and very resilient so it is often sought after for the manufacture of armor or shields or oven mitts.

Blood from a dragon's heart is like the Fountain of Youth - a superlative rejuvenant and restorative. Unfortunately, the dragon is usually dead when this happens.



Dragon sweat supposedly gives a man great courage, and can be brewed into a powerful intoxicant.

A brief Word About Wizardry

"Magic" in the sense of wizardry and spell casting is principally a human preoccupation, because it is usually an attempt by humans to duplicate something that a magical creature already does naturally. (i.e. Dragons don't need a magic spell to make fire balls.)

Magical beings rarely have any use for wizard spells.

That being said, if a magical creature does choose to dabble in a little magickery, he or she will have a much easier time of it than most human wizards and alchemists because the being's innate magic-ness will complement their spell casting.

This is a source of great frustration for human wizards because they work very hard at accumulating the various eyes of newts and legs of lamb they will need for their spells and it's exasperating to have an imp walk in at the last minute and create the same effect with a clove of garlic and a beer.

NOTE: All of the wizardry used in the show is "herbal" (i.e. It relies on a concoction of strange *ingredients* to create potions or spark alchemical reactions.) There won't be any summoning of demonic forces or chanting in Latin. (Wizard incantations, if any, will be short verses in plain English - usually simple admonitions just to let the clove of garlic know what it's supposed to be doing.)

[1] See: EPISODE PREMISES: "THE 500TH STEP"

[2] see below: MEDICINAL PROPERTIES

[3] See below: A WORD ABOUT WIZARDRY